

# SAFETY ALERT



AFZF-GA-SAFE

**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY**  
**HEADQUARTERS III CORPS AND FORT HOOD**  
**FORT HOOD, TEXAS 76544-5056**



17 September 2002

**MEMORANDUM FOR SEE DISTRIBUTION**

**SUBJECT: Serious Motorcycle Accident Highlights Value of Motorcycle Helmets -- Safety Alert 02-12**

1. Two nights ago, a Fort Hood soldier was seriously injured in a motorcycle crash resulting in what could be called a close call with death. The corporal was riding on a street in his neighborhood when he hit some loose gravel, causing him to lose control and being thrown off, hitting his head hard on the road. He was not wearing a motorcycle helmet, *which is* in violation of Army and post regulations. His serious injuries, described below, highlight the necessity of motorcycle helmets. At the post hospital emergency room, tests revealed that besides a visible head laceration, he also had internal bleeding in his skull. He was rushed to a nearby medical center where it was discovered that the soldier also had a fractured skull and a blood clot. The blood clot was successfully removed during emergency surgery and the lucky corporal is now in stable condition, recovering in the Intensive Care Unit. Hopefully, he will survive. Not wearing a required helmet set the stage for this soldier's "planets" to align and resulted in the terrible crash and subsequent life-threatening injuries.

2. AR 385-55 directs that "Soldiers will wear a properly fastened, approved helmet whenever and wherever (on or off post) they operate or ride a motorcycle or moped." Additionally, motorcycle operators must complete an approved motorcycle safety course prior to operating on post. Temporary registrations are made available in order for motorcyclists to schedule and attend such a course. I expect commanders and leaders to become familiar with all the safety requirements in AR 385-55 and strictly enforce them.

3. It is clear that the seriousness of this potential tragedy could have been avoided if the individual had taken responsibility of his actions and had worn a helmet; thus, preventing the "planets" to align. What is not clear at this time is whether the soldier's leaders knew he operated a motorcycle and had conveyed to him the safety requirements in AR 385-55. I want commanders to charge their leaders to become fully engaged and get a handle on which soldiers in their formations own and operate motorcycles. Then, leaders need to follow through by ensuring the identified motorcyclists wear required safety gear (helmet, clothes, reflective vest, gloves, etc.) and attend Army-mandatory motorcycle safety training. Committed leaders can make a difference here by positively injecting themselves into this motorcycle safety challenge to keep their soldiers alive and well.

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B. B. BELL  
Lieutenant General, USA  
Commanding

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